

YOU CAN'T STOP THE BEAT:
BRINGING MUSICAL THEATRE
TO UNDERPRIVILEGED YOUTH

by

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ABSTRACT

In an age of standardized testing and quality-controlled classrooms, teachers have lost the freedom to integrate imagination and creativity in their lessons, ultimately cheating today's youth. In the classroom, students no longer have the outlets that transport them from the harsh realities of life. This thesis is an attempt to provide a venue for the Orange County Public School System that will engage the imaginations of under-represented or underprivileged students.

The thesis will chronicle the development of a script with the intent of producing it in Title I elementary schools located in lower socio-economic areas of Orlando, Florida. The script will be based on Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tale "The Ugly Duckling." The final product will be a musical theatre piece to take into the school system to be performed by the students.

The body of the thesis will contain my prior experiences of bringing musical theatre to underprivileged youth. The document will also include chapters detailing the process of creating the script and composing the music. Research will determine the socio-economic challenges prevalent in the under-represented cultures in the urban schools of Orlando. Finally, the thesis will contain a section of the actual script and will conclude with a chapter summarizing the reactions to the first reading of the play

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE.....	vi
ACT ONE: THE INSPIRATION	1
Scene One: Who	1
Scene Two: What.....	2
Scene Three: When.....	3
Scene Four: Where.....	4
Scene Five: How	4
ACT TWO: THE RELOCATION	6
Scene One: Who	6
Scene Two: What.....	7
Scene Three: When.....	8
Scene Four: Where.....	9
Scene Five: How	10
ACT THREE: THE FACTS	12
ACT FOUR: THE RESEARCH.....	15
ACT FIVE: THE SHOW	23
ACT SIX: THE SCORE.....	44
ACT SEVEN: THE SEQUEL.....	46
ACT EIGHT: THE FINALE	50
APPENDIX: TITLE I SCHOOLS	52
REFERENCES	54

PROLOGUE

Rather than whiling away my summer relaxing by the glistening waters of a Florida beach, I endured the exhaustion of weekly relocations and the isolation of hotel rooms for a single reason: it afforded me the opportunity to expose more than three-hundred children to the marvels of musical theatre. When the Prairie Fire Children's Theatre, a professional touring company, offered me the position, I hesitated, due to the distance from my family and the duration of the commitment. However, my experience this past summer served as a pivotal moment in my life both professionally and personally. It not only clarified my purpose in life, it instilled in me a singular passion to create engaging musical productions that will provide for children who desperately need opportunities for growth and enrichment.

In February of 2009, I attended the Unified Professional Theatre Auditions in Memphis, Tennessee. As auditionee number 600, I maintained the audition was purely for the sake of experience, and I would not consider resulting offers. I performed my 90-second audition piece for a theatre full of discerning directors, and shortly afterward collected my callbacks, the first of which was for an unfamiliar company named Prairie Fire Children's Theatre. Nervously entering the single hotel room, I was greeted by the company's managing director and a casting assistant. After a short informational conversation about their company, the assistant asked me to perform as a teacher dealing with an unruly child. She taught me a short chant with choreography and then morphed

herself into an annoying seven-year-old student who was more interested in asking about my boyfriend than learning the skit. I patiently taught her what her twenty-something-year-old alter ego had just taught me. When my performance/teaching exam was concluded, the team requested my references and informed me they might not get back with me for a few months, but they were very happy with my callback. I left the room, heading for an evening of callbacks for companies with which I never intended to work. I returned home from Memphis on Tuesday and was contacted on Friday with a job offer from Prairie Fire Children's Theatre. Though I had a full summer schedule lined up in Orlando to teach musical theatre summer camps, I weighed the options of packing up and shipping out to an unknown land. Putting on a show in a week with a group of children is nothing new to me. However, Prairie Fire offered an experience of working with a much larger number of children on a weekly basis. Where my summer camps in Orlando would range from 10-15 kids, Prairie Fire shows are created to include over 80 children each week. I realized this was an opportunity like none other. I also felt this was the time in my life to step out of my comfort zone and learn through a new experience. Being on the road with one person for three and a half months could either end in a lifelong friendship or in pure agony, but either way, I was ready to learn about myself in a situation far from home. I accepted the offer, excited by the idea of a new adventure. Possessing no preconceptions of the role of a member of a touring children's theatre company, I was unprepared for the momentous impact this experience would have on the course of my life.

Designated the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland*, I was assigned a tour partner, Hannah Campbell from Iowa, a 21-year-old graduate with a BA in Theatre Arts,

and we were handed a tour schedule that included Minnesota, North Dakota, Iowa, and Wisconsin. When I arrived, Hannah and I were assigned a blue mini-van replete with costumes for 83 children, disassembled backdrops, a prop trunk, a suitcase filled to the brim with scripts, a makeup kit, a sewing kit, laundry detergent, jumper cables, and paperwork for contacting each town's sponsor with written procedures for collecting \$2400 each week. Thank goodness I thought to bring a map.

After a week spent mastering the mechanics of producing and performing our show, including costume changes and casting decisions, Hannah and I ventured to North Dakota. We followed a fixed schedule for the next thirteen weeks. Sunday, we arrived in a new town and, after calculating the mileage to the neighborhood Wal-mart, we unpacked for our weekly tenure. Throughout our journey, our living arrangements would range from a mom and pop motel with renovations dating back 1958, to a lakeside cabin (complete with deer, chipmunks, and lots of ticks), to Super 8s, to AmerInns, to a fancy Holiday Inn. On Monday, we met the kids, reviewed the expectations for the week, and cast the show, keeping two groups of kids for an hour-long rehearsal, making sure that rehearsals never lasted more than four hours a day. Tuesday, we taught separately; I led the large groups of up to 65 kids while Hannah taught the leads. By Wednesday, we taught the last two group songs and began a four-hour run-through of the show. Thursday, we ran the show twice with props and set, and by Friday, the children received their costumes for a dress rehearsal. We ate dinner together and, after putting on their makeup, we presented the show. Saturday was reserved for the second performance, followed by a few hours in the Laundromat. Rinse and repeat from the end of May to the end of August.

ACT ONE: THE INSPIRATION

Scene One: Who

For each Prairie Fire show touring in the upper Midwest, there are two employees responsible for each residency. To achieve maximum efficiency, they teach separately, covering more children and scenes in a shorter period. In addition to teaching the children, the partners teach the technical elements to the light and sound operators and serve as costume mistresses and makeup artists for the day of the show. Finally, they each fulfill a major role in the production with one person directing onstage for the majority of the show while the other handles the actors waiting offstage, effectively managing the continuity of each performance. The onstage director manages children who have forgotten lines or any emergency situation, for instance, missing a prop mid-scene. The offstage director manages all offstage emergencies including everything from crowd control to inopportune bloody noses. Initially, I opposed the director having a role in the show, but I eventually realized it was the most effective means of maintaining the show's continuity. Similarly, while my partner and I experienced occasional personality conflicts, one of us could not have created an hour-long show featuring 83 children in one week without the help of the other.

The show directors are hired after an audition process. The company travels to large audition arenas, where theatre companies and actors discover one another. Prairie Fire Children's Theatre annually attends the Unified Professional Theatre Alliance

auditions (UPTA) in Memphis, TN, the Wisconsin Theatre Auditions (WTAs) in Madison, WI, and the Twin Cities Unified Theatre Auditions (TCUTAs) in Minneapolis, MN. After seeing all the performers, they call back applicants who either have teaching experience on their resumes or who display an enthusiasm for children's theatre. In the callbacks, the auditionee learns about the company, answers questions regarding experience in children's theatre/educational theatre, and teaches the casting director a small piece of theatre, e.g. how to mimic a troll or sing a certain song. The auditioning director created a discipline problem, which the auditionee had to properly address before continuing the lesson. Before making any offers, the company checks references and performs a background check on each candidate.

The children of each community and the tour directors are equally responsible for creating the show. Children play just as vital a role as the tour directors in the process of creating a show. The target audience range for these productions consists of ages 7 and up; however, depending on the community, some productions involve older participants. The company also offers opportunities for a smaller group of students to participate in Prairie Fire. For example, one community opens the experience to the graduated eighth grade class only, creating anticipation in the younger kids of the town to reach that time in their lives.

Scene Two: What

An excellent stage play and first-rate music are vital in creating children's theatre that is engaging to both the parental audience and the children performers. Prairie Fire

Children's Theatre prides itself on offering original musical adaptations suitable for all ages. They gear the roles for a variety of talent so any person -- be he or she a singer, a dancer, or even a mere theatre enthusiast -- can participate. The titles they have adapted for musical theatre include *Alice in Wonderland*, *Aladdin and His Magic Lamp*, *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Peter Pan*, *Pinocchio*, *Tom Sawyer*, and *The Wizard of Oz*. Though the majority of these titles are familiar to young audience members through exposure to Disney movies, it is noteworthy that they have included some classic literature (*Tom Sawyer*) and even Shakespeare (*Midsummer*.)

Scene Three: When

With today's generation of children being quite over-extended, it is difficult for parents to add more long-term commitments to their already-crammed schedules. Prairie Fire Children's Theatre offers a year round schedule of productions in which children can participate, requiring the commitment of only one week. During their fall and winter/spring tours, the kids meet after school for four hours a day. They begin with auditions on Monday and perform a full musical production by Friday night. Depending on the community, there may or may not be a repeat performance on Saturday.

During the summer, when there is a little more flexibility in the students' schedules, the community decides the time frame from which the students will meet and rehearse. Prairie Fire requires a daily time allotment of four hours, with a fifteen-minute break. Some communities may choose to rehearse in the morning, afternoons, and evenings. The majority of the show is taught on Tuesday. The tour partners split up the scenes to

optimize rehearsal time, consequently eliminating the need for all the students to participate in every rehearsal. This makes it a more enjoyable experience for both the players and the directors.

Scene Four: Where

Dating back to the origin of theatre, actors have been packing their sets, props, and costumes, and hitting the road in search of a friendly audience. Prairie Fire Children's Theatre does not stray from its thespian ancestors, touring through communities all over the upper Midwest. The majority of their bookings are in the state of Minnesota, where the company is based. They do, however, travel to North and South Dakota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and occasionally Illinois for bookings.

The majority of these towns are very small, typically agrarian communities. Each community is responsible for providing a rehearsal space as well as a performance venue that can accommodate a suitable audience. Though this usually consists of a school -- either an elementary school with a gym or a high school with a performing arts auditorium -- some cities use a community center for the rehearsals and an outdoor venue for the performances. Prairie Fire prides itself on being completely self-contained, making it easy to travel in and out of any venue. They provide boom-boxes in case no sound system is available, as well as all the props, costumes, and sets. Each show is written to require minimal lighting, thereby eliminating any cost-prohibitive reason why a town would choose not to participate in a production.

Scene Five: How

One large drawback to any arts organization is the painful reality of finding financial backing. Prairie Fire has devised a system that ensures its survival, as long as communities continue to value arts education. The residency of Prairie Fire Children's Theatre is sponsored in each town by an organization in the community. It could be a single business, many businesses, a school, or a community events center that puts up the \$2400 for the week. It is also their financial responsibility to pay for two hotel rooms for the tour directors for seven nights, as well as set up a location for rehearsals and performances. Some community sponsors assume all the financial responsibility, making it free for any child to participate. Others enact a registration fee, charging anywhere from \$10 to \$30 per participating child. The majority of the towns place a charge on admission to the performance in order to reclaim some of their expenses.

ACT TWO: THE RELOCATION

Scene One: Who

Integrating the lessons I learned working for the Prairie Fire Children's Theatre into my own community of Orlando, Florida will fill a regrettable void in the district's school system. While the demographics of the bustling metropolitan region of Central Florida contrast sharply with those of Iowa's sleepy rural communities, students from both regions suffer from a dearth of creative theatrical outlets. This assertion may appear counterintuitive for those familiar with the apparently abundant theatrical opportunities available in the greater Orlando area, but upon closer inspection, most of those opportunities are geared towards children fortunate enough to perch in the upper regions of the socioeconomic stratosphere. Children from impoverished families are often counted lucky to merely have a meal and a decent education, while their spirits and creative minds slowly diminish over time. While such physical needs must and should be met, it is imperative that we nurture the creative needs of these children, not squander them. For many of these children, exposure to an arts program could change the path of their lives; children who may turn to sex, violence, and drugs in order to fill emotional voids could be persuaded to look to theatre for comfort, acceptance, and hope. Young men and women trying to survive in a society that often demeans any display of emotion as a sign of weakness can be damaged by years of repressed rage, misery, sorrow, and even joy. Experiencing the social bonds and the cathartic power of theatre could give those same

youths the chance to release those emotions in an acceptable forum and avoid potential damage. I envision creating a musical that is suitable predominantly for children in the third through the sixth grades, for elementary-aged children who are young enough still to be receptive to new ideas but old enough to truly participate. I will bring my musical theatre piece into inner-city schools around Orlando and the surrounding areas in order to offer an opportunity for these children to partake in a theatrical experience that would boost both their self-esteem and their social skills.

Scene Two: What

The question of material is a very important one. Initially, ideas flooded in, from fairy tales, to Shakespeare, to American classics, to African American folk tales. I created a set of questions for myself in order to narrow my focus. What is relevant to kids today? If children today are used to the Disney versions of many of these stories, will they accept different versions? Do kids even watch Disney musicals anymore? Will educational organizations be more willing to finance a project that reinterprets classic novels for a younger audience, e.g. *Tom Sawyer* or *Huckleberry Finn*? If I want to relate to the culture of my intended demographic, would it be helpful to draw from the source material of African American folk tales like “Ananse,” the spider who gets into all sorts of trouble? And not only do I have to worry about the initial source material, but the story itself has to be formatted into a play that children can learn in a short amount of time. Sorting through the whirl-wind of ideas and studying the statistics of Title I schools in Orange County brought me no relief. In an attempt to get to know the population, I charted the poverty rates, as

well as the breakdown of each ethnicity represented in Orange County Title I schools. Perhaps in the future these ideas will lead to a variety of shows that can serve a plethora of schools with differing demographics; but first, one show needs to prove successful.

After answering some initial questions, I decided I not only wanted to incorporate music into the show, but I also wanted to make rhythm a strong foundation for the story. Regardless of the kids' upbringing on folk tales or Disney movies, urban children from differing ethnic backgrounds have a commonality in a rhythmic language. If you drive through the neighborhoods of NYC, from the pulsing bass line in Harlem to the vibrant percussion in Washington Heights to the steel drums of a Caribbean neighborhood, children grow up with their own rhythm and intrinsic beat. I believe the children in all urban neighborhoods, including Orlando, have this in common. I finally settled upon focusing on the overall themes of tolerance and acceptance, the major themes of the 1843 fairy tale, "The Ugly Duckling," by Hans Christian Anderson. In my play, instead of ducks, the kids will still be kids. And instead of swimming together in a flock, they will walk together to a particular rhythmic beat, or sing together in a music group. However, one of these "ducklings" will not quite be able to keep up with the others. Throughout the show, his teammates, in an attempt to help the "ugly duckling" conform, will learn that his non-conformity actually moves the group to a higher level. Perhaps the "ugly duckling" will even inspire all his friends to be true to themselves and find their own beat.

Scene Three: When

While Prairie Fire Children's Theatre keeps the same rigorous one week schedule

during the school year, I am not sure four hour rehearsals would be conducive as part of an after-school program in an inner city. The biggest reason for this is the difficulties of transportation. In the rural upper-midwest, children are able to walk home safely in the evening hours. In Orlando, after-school rehearsals might not be able to extend into the evening. This only allows 2-3 hours of rehearsal per day. Depending on the length of the show, and whether or not there are two directors, the process may need to be extended to two weeks. But staying true to Prairie Fire's model, the students would rehearse daily after school, and perform on Friday evening, with the possibility of a Saturday show.

Scene Four: Where

The communities in the upper-midwest are committed to bringing in events for children in their towns. Because of this, many different venues, such as churches, schools, and community centers all pitch in to offer space for rehearsal and performances. Bringing this vision to Orlando would slightly limit these possibilities, as this program would be designed solely for school children in one specific location. Therefore, all rehearsals and performances would have to take place at the elementary school. A gymnasium or cafeteria/auditorium would be a perfect space for rehearsal and performance; however, any space large enough to contain the cast, from a classroom to a courtyard, could be used as a rehearsal area, as long as a separate performance space is attained.

The target schools for this particular show would be inner-city, Title I elementary schools. Children in higher socio-economic communities have far more opportunities for field-trips and other cultural experiences. It is rarer for those in Title I schools to regularly

attend live theatre on weekends, much less for their parents to have the expendable income to place them into theatre or music classes outside of school. Based on the 2007 US Census, the median household income for Orange County was \$57,195, while the median household income for Pine Hills, a lower socioeconomic suburb of Orlando, was \$37,060. Because of this fact, educational grants exist for teaching artists to provide arts education to these communities. Initially, I will begin targeting schools in Orange County and begin creating a rapport with community sponsors, principals, and arts coordinators. Once I have established myself there, I will move into the surrounding counties, such as Seminole, Osceola, Lake, and Volusia.

Scene Five: How

Many organizations, such as United Arts of Central Florida, Orange County Arts and Cultural Affairs, and various charitable foundations, provide grants that support cultural and performing arts. They specifically fund opportunities in the area that help expose students to various cultural arts. I will be supported in this process by working with Winter Park Playhouse, Central Florida's only professional musical theatre. I will be surrounded by professionals who have been working in a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization for many years. Writing grants and gaining community support is their area of expertise. They have been looking for an opportunity to begin an outreach program through the theatre. I am currently the music director and an actor in *Schoolhouse Rock, Live! Jr.* through their theatre. We have been supported by a grant through United Arts to bring the show into Title I elementary schools in Orange, Seminole and Lake counties. With

the opportunity for growth, the theatre is excited to create a program in which these children can create live theatre.

ACT THREE: THE FACTS

My experiences with Prairie Fire Children's Theatre revealed the extent to which children can benefit from involvement in theatre and inspired me to implement a similar program in local Title I schools. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 defines a Title I school as one in which 40% or more of its students come from low-income families. Of the 172 regular-attendance schools in Orange County, 55 qualify for Title I funding. Of these 55, 17 have received a school grade of D or F at least once since 2004. It is my belief that extracurricular theatre projects enrich any student's education and should be included as part of these schools' improvement plans. Organizations such as the United Arts of Central Florida and the Orange County Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs underwrite theatre projects in such schools, to the benefit of many. Involvement in theatre allows children to open up and express themselves. It promotes teamwork and cooperation with others and instills a sense of achievement in a child, thereby increasing self-esteem. It encourages parental involvement via audience participation. All in all, children find the time they spend at school more enjoyable, and are therefore more motivated to succeed in all areas of academia. Theatre is an avenue of emotional and intellectual exploration I would like to make available to all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Given the number of Title I schools in Central Florida, I believe this is an ideal location for piloting after-school theatre projects for lower-income children.

Before beginning the process of applying for grants to work with these organizations in Central Florida, I wanted to study the statistics on Orange County Public

Title I Schools. Seeing the percentage of students living in poverty and receiving free or reduced lunch puts this mission into perspective. Fortunately, the research listed in Appendix A not only pinpoints the population of children in OCPS Title I schools, it also shows the caliber of schools in the area and their commitment to creating a rich educational environment. Even at a glance, the grading system, given to all Florida public K-12 schools, shows the dedication of the teachers, guidance counselors, principals and possibly parents to create the best school possible in underprivileged locations. Awareness of whether a school is a D school compared to an A school gives the teaching artist/director a better grasp on what kind of environment he or she may be entering. A school that has raised its grades each year for the past three shows a determination to improve, while a school that has remained at a D or F may have lower standards for behavior, creating a harder job for the resident director entering the new environment.

The enrollment numbers for each school is a huge tool for arts funding. When applying for a grant, it is important to prove to the board that their allocated monies will be reaching as many students as possible. Though my current script calls for twenty cast members, in the future, I will expand it so it can reach more students. Also, even with the existing small cast, the principal might decide to include an in-school performance of the show, exposing many more children to live theatre. The statistics from each school will be an initial tool in choosing the specific schools to serve in order to meet the demands of the grant, as well as create more support for future monetary donations and gains.

Finally, the spreadsheet details a breakdown of the ethnicities of children, as well as the minority rate for each Title I school. In future endeavors, this may be a useful guide as

far as writing materials that may be specific to one particular sub-culture. Currently, my musical theatre piece relates to every child in that age range who has faced adversity. However, in the future, the specificity of the content will increase as I get more acquainted with the children with which I will be working.

The spreadsheet of data not only furnishes a quick access point for contacting possible schools for bookings, it also provides the research needed for future funding.

ACT FOUR: THE RESEARCH

Analyzing popular musical theatre repertoire written exclusively for children to perform will give a summary of information to guide me in the process of writing my own musical. *How to Eat Like a Child: and Other Lessons in NOT Being a Grown Up!*, with music and lyrics by John Forster, is one of the best musicals I have found for kids of all skill levels to perform. Through my years of teaching, I have used *How to Eat Like a Child* with talented singers and actors, as well as those who cannot match pitch. Because I will be teaching in the public school systems, I cannot assume these children will be able to learn atonal melodies or rhythms more complicated than the ABC song. When I compose my own theatre piece, I will strive to use the conventions in *How to Eat Like a Child*, as I know it is material suitable for a wide variety of students. I have found kids are able to learn and retain this score and script with ease, but have never sought to understand the reasons why this is so. I will need to complete a comprehensive analysis of the piece in order to understand what about *How to Eat Like a Child* makes it so accessible.

The opening number, “Like a Child,” begins with a solo by the character George. The piano accompaniment sustains major chords as the soloist sings in a very speech-like patter. The range is a to b1 and the rhythmic marking at the top of the score is “free,” allowing the child to perform at his own pace. The first half of the first and second verse is set up in a series of solos ranging from half a measure to ten measures. The entire cast joins in for the second half of the song, allowing every student to participate in the opening number. The vocal range does not stray far from an octave—from bb (B flat) to c2, which stays in the comfortable range of any

pre-pubescent child. The piano accompaniment for the first two verses consists of very simple chord structures mirroring the rhythmic line of the melody that supports the young singers. The melody line is always doubled in the top note of the accompaniment, therefore further supporting the singer. The bridge and final verse keeps the same essentials of a narrow melodic line, the simple rhythms (eighth, quarter and half notes), while adding some more rhythmic interest in the accompaniment. Instead of playing each chord and holding it for the entire measure, the chord is broken into two, playing the melody on the downbeat (with the singer) and adding the 3rd and 5th of the chord on the “and” of each beat. This is an easy way to add some rhythmic interest without changing any of the support given to the singers in the first two verses. The final chorus is supported by a walking bass line and very simple melody, which builds with the accompaniment for a grand finish. Another trick used to add excitement to the end of this song is selecting very percussive words that add rhythm without creating intricate rhythmic patterns. The lyrics are “jump and bump your noggin, trip and rip your trousers, lose your mitten, skin your elbow, and start to cry...we do what we’ve got to, even if we’re not to, like a chi-chi-child!” (Forster 14). This articulation tool builds excitement for the performer, as well as the audience, without adding difficulty.

The second number, “I Feel Sick,” is a trio between three girls who are trying to play hooky from school. It is an important song to analyze to see how the composer stacks three parts in a simple pattern. As in the first song, the piano accompaniment doubles the soloist’s melody line. The song opens with one girl singing about being too sick to do arithmetic. The rhyme scheme makes it easy for a child to memorize, while the chromatic melody adds interest while remaining simple. The range is narrow and does not stray from the octave used in the opening

number. Soloist number one finishes her verse and then repeats her opening phrase, “I feel sick.” The second soloist agrees with the first by singing “me too!” and continues the section as a call and response with the first singer. The overall melody line jumps between the two singers as they tell two different tales with a similar theme. The call and response continues until the third singer enters in a second response, revealing to the audience that all three are too sick to go to school. A key change then brings in the third singer’s plight of sickness. The three singers continue repeating each other, singing the same word, spaced one beat apart. The melody jumps around through all three singers until measure 61, when they finally sing the same words, melody and rhythm in unison. The only harmony that is introduced is in measure 80 when the girls stack a C major chord. Singer three sings the tonic on the word “Ow!” and holds for two beats before singer two sings the dominant G on the word “Ee!” for two beats, followed by the first singer, who sings the submediant note of the chord on the word “Oh!” The three hold the chord for two beats before the third singer jumps up the octave to finish the chord. They sing this twice before they repeat the pattern up a whole step. The song ends with all three girls singing the same melody line, ending in unison. “I Feel Sick” is the perfect example of adding interest to a small ensemble number without creating intricate harmonies or rhythmic patterns.

The second small ensemble number in the show, “Say Yes,” is a duet between two siblings, as they try to persuade their parents to let them have a dog. The majority of this song is spoken in rhythm over a “boom-chuck” accompaniment line that repeats every four bars. The singers go back and forth in this exciting dialogue as they tell the story of finding a dog. The rhythm is not very hard, using only eighth, quarter, half, and dotted quarter notes, but the intensity of the singers speaking in rhythm drives the story. In measure 38, the two begin

singing for the first time. The melody is in unison, and while written in 4/4 time, the phrases are very short and asymmetrical, keeping the feel of the song very rhythmic. The story continues in the same pattern of spoken dialogue between the two, which ends in the same melody line. The short B section, written in the relative minor key, is also sung in unison. Changing harmonic modes is another way to add variety without complicating the song. It quickly returns to the A section to finish out the story. The final melody section beginning in measure 132 changes keys to the parallel key of the B section, adding a sense of final arrival. The pulsing bass line in the accompaniment creates the feel of a kick line as the children give one last attempt to persuade their parents to say yes. Analyzing the structure of the accompaniment at the end, with a rhythmic marking of “heavy swing,” shows how easy it is to transition a fun upbeat song into a grand Broadway-sounding finale. The last five measures of the song offer two-part harmony, as the performers sing in thirds. This, of course, could be omitted by having them both sing the melody line if the children are not advanced enough to sing harmony. There are many interesting components built into this song, yet the dialogue and melody of the performers remains rather simple, making this viable material for all skill levels.

Song number five, “Means ‘No,’” is group number that can utilize the entire cast. The entire set-up of the song is call and response structure. The premise is that the mom and dad can say many different things, but at the end, it all means no. The children are set up into two groups: the kids and the parents. The kid group will say a line, and the parent group responds with “means no.” For example: Kids: “we’ll see.” Parents: “Means no!” Kids: “Not now.” Parents: “Means no!,” etc. The melody lines for these are very interesting, and follow a pattern throughout. The kids’ lines are always ascending melodies, as if they are always hopeful for a

positive response, while the parents' lines in a quick two note passage, are always descending, further exaggerating the negative response. Out of all the songs thus far in the show, this is the most challenging for the accompanist. Even a non-trained musician can look at the paper and see there are many more black notes for the pianist to play, as the rhythms are more challenging. Buried into the accompaniment is always the melody line for the singers. This composer is committed to supporting the young singers as much as possible. However, the style of this piece lends itself to being performed in spoken dialogue. This allows kids to speak on pitch, teaching them to first steps to singing. The final chord offers the ensemble the opportunity to sing in three-part harmony, with the tonic doubled in octaves. It is outlined with an arpeggiated chord in the accompaniment; however, the ending could easily be simplified by removing the third and fifth of the chord and having the performers sing in octaves.

Another simple device to add interest to a musical score is to change the meter of the piece. Song number six, "Why Should A Kid Have to Walk?" is a solo about injustice. This is the first time in the score that $\frac{3}{4}$ meter has been utilized. The rhythmic marking is a sad waltz. Like many slow ballads, the introduction to the song consists of the melody line raised up one octave. The entire song utilizes the same vocal range as the previous numbers, never straying from b to d1. The melody line consists of simple rhythmic patterns, with the most difficult figure of a dotted quarter tied to an eighth note. The accompaniment follows the melodic line, only playing the third below the melody as well. Something very interesting in this piece is the composer writes in the breaths for the singer. The last ten measures of the song are filled with the singer repeating the line "and walk, and walk, and walk, and walk, and walk" (Forster 33). Between each "and walk," Mr. Forster writes in a breath mark. He uses the breaths to create the

feeling of an aspirated child. Writing music this deliberately and meticulously helps achieve the same product each time it is performed. This is very important when it comes to writing music to be performed by school-aged children with a week of rehearsal. Not having time for much character development or opportunities to explore ideas, the more that is written in the music, the better the outcome will be in the long run.

Many of the same techniques are used in the seventh song, “Waiting Waiting;” however, there are a few new additions that have not been explored in the previous songs. At the top of the song, the singer sings in a slow 4/4 tempo about waiting for mom to come after school. It is the first time the accompaniment does not double the melodic line. However, it does play the singer’s note on the second part of each note. The melody begins with half notes, with the accompaniment supporting on the second and fourth beat of each bar. This is a way to support the singer without constantly plunking the melody. On the phrase “nothing’s more exasperating,” the composer wrote a staccato accompaniment, which is an easy way to create a more frantic undertone from which the child performer can draw energy. This moves into the phrase “waiting, waiting” which is supported by heavy accompaniment line of chords, with added chromatics to give a greater feeling of discomfort. This unobtrusive addition of text painting gives more color to a slow solo ballad. As the song continues, the singer begins to get more and more frantic as he or she waits for the car to arrive. To create more anxiety, the accompaniment moves to straight eighth notes under a quarter note melody that repeats the same note for an entire phrase. This continues to build until finally the meter changes to $\frac{3}{4}$, with a tempo marking of “fast (in1).” This is a new way for the composer to add intensity without putting added pressure on the young singer. It continues to be supported by the accompaniment;

as a grand finale leading up to the singer seeing his or her mom, the singer chromatically walks up the scale until he or she finally lands on the dominant scale degree, finishing the song.

Song number nine, “The Birthday Song,” is a lovely ballad for a solo performer. It is one of the most challenging pieces, which I do not think was done on accident by the composer. While the song is written in an easy to read common time, the accompaniment interlude is quite syncopated with many triplet figures. The opening part of the song is simple for the singer, allowing him or her to be free in his or her interpretation. However, once the introduction is finished, the meter changes to $\frac{3}{4}$ and the rhythmic complexity increases. For the first time in the score, the composer gives the singer sixteenth notes in the melody line, as well as dotted eighth-sixteenth patterns. Not only does the rhythm intensify, but also the melodic line grows more difficult. The melody line weaves in and out from major to minor as the performer journeys through the good and bad emotions of his or her birthday. There are also large dynamic changes in the accompaniment in this piece, which gives clues to the singer for dynamic interest of the song. Adding this song to the score gives the director an opportunity to spotlight an advanced performer. It is a wise move when directing kids to have songs for all skill levels. In a show like *How to Eat Like a Child*, a series of vignettes with a common through-line, there are ways to spotlight every child. This may be through a solo, a small ensemble number, or a scene not including music. Having a song that can challenge a more advanced singer is a good thing to have in case there is a child who is up for the task. It will be important to remember in my show that there needs to be options to simplify a challenging song, or at worst, cut it completely if a certain cast cannot handle it.

The final number in *How to Eat Like a Child* is a reprise of the opening song, “Like a Child.” It is a shortened version of the original and includes the entire ensemble singing in unison. This creates bookends for the show and gives a sense of completion, even though there is not a fully developed story line. It also is a good way to give every child one last opportunity for stage time without adding another song to learn.

By examining the conventions used by John Forster in writing the music and lyrics for *How to Eat Like a Child*, I believe I have come to understand an effective formula for creating music that is easy to teach and simple to perform for children for all skill levels. Studying the uses of a narrow vocal range, simple melody lines, changing meters, and supportive accompaniment, I will be able to take these ideas and put them into practice for my show.

ACT FIVE: THE SHOW

(Lights up on TEACHER and KIDS 1-9 in a disheveled music room, with only chairs and a boombox.)

SCENE ONE:

Teacher

Attention Class. Attention! It's that time of year again, when we've got to prepare for the annual all-county singing fest! And the group competition is looking tougher than ever. With Campbell Elementary receiving all that money to make a new music room, they've had the opportunity to make their performance the best possible. We might not have a lot of money, but we here at Oakley can promise one thing, and that's hard work. So that's what I'm expecting from each of you as we prepare. OK, so for the rules: remember every one of you must participate or we will be disqualified. And the performance must be original and come from you. It's up to you to make this! So, I'll leave you to discuss...

All

Uphill

FIRST DAY GOTTA REHEARSE,

GOTTA BE GOOD, GOTTA BE GREAT!

THIS YEAR WE'RE GONNA WIN, WE'LL KNOCK 'EM DEAD,

WE'LL SET 'EM STRAIGHT.

WE'VE GOT THE MOVES, AND WE HAVE GOT OUR SKILL.

THERE'S NO PLACE FOR US TO GO, EXCEPT RIGHT ON UPHILL.

HMM...

Kid 1

So what do we want to do this year? It's gotta be good.

Kid 2

I don't know, but that Disney mess we did last year ain't gonna fly again.

Kid 3

Let's do *Thriller*...Look, I got the moves! (*dances*)

Kids 1-9

(*Laugh*) Nah!

All

AT THE END OF THE DAY, WHEN SCHOOL IS DONE

WE GET TO SING

WE ARE WATCHING THE CLOCK, WAITING FOR WHEN THE BELL WILL RING.

YOU NEED A TOOL, LIKE SHAKESPEARE WITH HIS QUILL

SOMETHING TO ENSURE SUCCESS

OUR SONGS WILL TAKE US UPHILL.

HMM...

Kids 4 and 5

I'm not dancing!

Kid 6

Ok look, we have to work together to get this done. I've made a brainstorming template so we can all get our ideas out.

Kids 1-5

(Laugh)

Kid 1

We don't need your help goody-two-shoes...I believe that "Whole New World" garbage was your idea last year...

Kid 2

Yeah, go back and *brainstorm* with your friends...we got it this time.

All

WE ARE (WE ARE)

CLIMBING UPHILL (CLIMBING UPHILL)

WAY UP HIGH (WAY UP HIGH)
PAST THE SKY! (PAST THE SKY!)
WE ARE (WE ARE)
CLIMBING UPHILL (CLIMBING UPHILL)
WINNING THE GAME (WINNING THE GAME)
TALKING THE FAME! (TALKING THE FAME!)

WE ARE CLIMBING UPHILL!

Teacher

Attention Class. We have a new student. This is Kid 10. I know you'll make him feel welcome. I've told him about the competition, so make sure he fits in to your plans!

(TEACHER pulls aside kid 6) As class president, I need you to help Kid 10 fit in. His dad said he has a hard time making friends. But, if I know you, you'll make him feel right at home! Good luck.

Kid 7

Hi Kid 10!

Kid 8

Welcome to Oakley!

Kid 9

Where did you move from?

Kid 10

(looks down, embarrassed)

Kid 6

It's ok, we understand if you're scared. Welcome!

Kid 10

(looks up, smiles, drags taps on floor/claps/snaps/something)

Kid 1

What was that sound?

Kid 2

You got something on your shoe?

Kid 10

(Taps again)

Kids 1-5

(laugh)

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

Kids 11-20 Enter

Campbell Cheer

CAMPBELL, CAMPBELL!

CAMPBELL, CAMPBELL!

WIN THE GAME AND EARN OUR FAME.

BE THE ONE, NUMBER ONE TO TAKE THE FAME.

CAMPELL, CAMPBELL!

CAMPBELL, CAMPBELL!

TAKE THE DAY AND FORGE OUR WAY. BE THE ONE, NUMBER ONE,

LET ME HEAR YOU SAY

CAMPELL, CAMPBELL!

CAMPBELL, CAMPBELL!

Kid 11

Did you hear about those dweebs at Oakley?

Kid 12

They got some weird new kid who can't even sing!

Kid 13

We have nothing to worry about this year!

Kid 14

They might as well not even show up.

Kid 15

But when they do, we'll knock 'em flat!

Kid 11

We gotta go practice.

All exit, warming up/humming/singing

SCENE THREE

Enter Kid 10 with Kids 6-9

Kid 6

So, this tapping you do with your feet, what does that mean?

Kid 10

(taps the syllable rhythm "what does that mean")

Kid 6

(beat) Why do you do that?

Kid 10

(taps the same syllable rhythm "why do you do that?")

Kid 6

Wait! Do you talk with your feet?!

Kid 10

(taps)

Kid 7

That's so cool!

(Kid 8 tries it but fails. Without words, Kid 10 teaches a step to 6-9 while kids 1-5 watch from a distance. Kids 6-10 exit)

Kid 1

It's over. That kid's going to ruin it for all of us.

Kid 2

Let's see what he has to say... *(walks over to Kid 10)* Hey, new kid, why can't you just be like the rest of us?

Kid 3

Yeah, this is CHORUS. We sing here. If you can't do it, you should go some place else.

Kid 6

Wait a second! I have an idea. *(runs to get large book)* It says here in the manual, all students must participate. But it never says all must sing!

Kid 7

That's a great idea! As long as we work together, we still have a shot at winning!

Kid 4

We're not going to talk with our feet. Or our hands. Or nothing else...we're gonna...

(All kids break out in argument)

Teacher

Attention Class! Attention! It seems you all can't see eye to eye in here. That's fine. Just remember, if you want to uphold your title as champion, not to mention pass my class, it is imperative that you all participate. So, I suggest you learn to work together.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FOUR

Kids 11-20 enter

Campbell Cheer Reprise

CAMPELL, CAMPBELL!

CAMPBELL, CAMPBELL!

WIN THE GAME AND EARN OUR FAME.

BE THE ONE, NUMBER ONE TO TAKE THE FAME.

CAMPELL, CAMPBELL!

CAMPBELL, CAMPBELL!

Kid 15

So word on the street is that Oakley hasn't even picked a song!

Kid 16

No...no... my friend Billy says they've picked a song...they just can't all sing it!

(Kids laugh)

Kid 10

I hate to brag, but we got this in the bag.

Kid 17

Should we work on the dance now?

Kid 11

Please! We don't need to waste our time on a dance; we're gonna be the best singers already!

Kid 13

Yeah, let's go shoot some hoops instead.

(all run off)

SCENE FIVE

(Kid 1-5 enter)

Kid 5

You know that song isn't too bad...

Kid 4

Ha! Much better than flying carpets...

Kid 3

I think Oakley might have a chance...even with that loser in our group.

Kid 1

Wait a minute! You mean to tell me you WANT us to win? You WANT to show those dweebs that everything worked out? No way! We're not going to let that happen.

Kids1-5

What do you mean? Yeah, what? (*Etc. ad lib.*)

Kid1

We'll show up tomorrow, all right. But we're not going up on stage to make fools of ourselves!

Kid 2

But if we don't go, Oakley will be disqualified.

Kid 1

Exactly.

Kid 3

But that means...

Kid 4

We can't...

Kid 5

ah ha....

Kid 1

That's right. If our special little friend can't play by our rules, we won't play by his. Go ahead and crown Campbell champion, and we'll have the last laugh....

(All laugh, exit)

SCENE SIX

TEACHER

Welcome Everyone to the 2010 Shazam Choir Competition. This afternoon's competition will be between rival schools Campbell and Oakley. Our judges will be rating the students on originality, excitability, and, of course, total group participation. May the best school win!

Kids 1-5 hide downstage. Kids 11-20 enter, sing

The Doxology

PRAISE GOD FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW

PRAISE HIM ALL CREATURES HERE BELOW

PRAISE HIM ABOVE YE HEAVENLY HOST

PRAISE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY GHOST

Kids 6-10

(enter, take positions, cannot find the rest of their group)

(ad lib) Oh no! Where could they be? What happened? Etc.

Teacher

It appears Oakley Elementary is not in full participation. I am sorry to inform you that you will be dis....

Kid 10

(Interrupting) Wait! I have something to say.

All

(gasp.)

Kid 10

A List That Will Never End

I FEEL FREE AND WELCOME HERE.

YOU ARE FRIENDS THAT I HOLD DEAR.

I WAS SCARED OF ALL OF YOU,

BUT YOU SHOWED ME THAT BEING SCARED IS A SILLY THING TO DO.

I WAS SO NERVOUS, SHAKING HEAD TO TOE.

ALWAYS WITH THE SLIGHTEST URGE TO GET UP AND GO.

NEVER HAVE I EVER HAD A FRIEND.

NOW I'VE GOT A LIST THAT WILL NEVER END.

MY TAPPING FEET WERE ALL I HAD.

YOU ACCEPTED THEM WHICH MADE ME GLAD.

IT IS REALLY HARD TO KEEP A SMILE

WHEN BEING TEASED AND POKED FOR FUN

AND MEANWHILE...

I WAS SO NERVOUS, SHAKING HEAD TO TOE.

ALWAYS WITH THE SLIGHTEST URGE TO GET UP AND GO.

NEVER HAVE I EVER HAD A FRIEND.

NOW I'VE GOT A LIST THAT WILL NEVER END.

YOU MADE ME WHAT I AM TODAY.

YOU GAVE ME WHAT I HAVE TODAY.

YOU SHOWED ME WHAT I SEE TODAY.

YOU TAUGHT ME WHAT I KNOW TODAY

I WAS NERVOUS, SHAKING HEAD TO TOE

ALWAYS WITH THE SLIGHTEST URGE TO GET UP AND GO

NEVER HAVE I EVER HAD A FRIEND
NOW I'VE GOT A LIST THAT WILL NEVER END.

Kid 1

He can talk?

Kid 2

He can sing?

Kid 3

And he only did it...

Kid 4 and 5

because of us!

(Kids 1-5 rush to the stage)

Kid 4

Kid 10, we're sorry.

Kid 5

We didn't know you could...

Kid 2

I mean you never told us that you...

Kid 3

We can't believe...

Kid 1

Listen, kid. I...uh...we...well...sorry man...that we...that we...oh forget it.

Kid 2

I think Kid 1 is trying to say we apologize for the way we treated you.

Kid 3

Yeah, it wasn't right...

Kid 4

...just because you were different.

Kid 1

So, we cool?

Kid 10

(taps yes, then speaks) Sure. "We cool".

Kid 6

Miss Teacher, Miss Teacher, did you hear that? We're all here now! Can we still compete?

Teacher

Of course you can! Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you: Oakley Elementary!

Kids 1-10

BURSTING AT THE SEAMS

HERE WE ARE AT THE ENDING

AND MAGIC FILLS THE AIR

NOW, LOOK OUT 'CAUSE WE'RE THERE.

FOLKS ARE HERE AROUND US,

OLD AND BRAND NEW FRIENDS.

HOLDING HANDS IS A SYMBOL,

FEEL THE MESSAGE THAT IT SENDS.

HOLDING HANDS, FEELING TRUST.

LOCKING EYES, MAKING DREAMS.

CLIMBING HIGH, SEEING JOY

BURSTING AT THE SEAMS.

TAKE A MOMENT TO LOOK AROUND

AND SEE THE FACE OF CHEER.

NOW I KNOW HAPPINESS

FOR IT ALL SEEMS SO CLEAR.

TAKE A BREAK AND TAKE A STEP.

TAKE A MOMENT TO RELAX.

BE THE TRAIN THAT KEEPS ON CHUGGING.

THROUGH THE ROUGH AND DIFFICULT TRACKS.

HOLDING HANDS, FEELING TRUST

LOCKING EYES, MAKING DREAMS

CLIMBING HIGH, SEEING JOY

BURSTING AT THE SEAMS

HOLDING HANDS, FEELING TRUST

LOCKING EYES, MAKING DREAMS

CLIMBING HIGH, SEEING JOY

BURSTING AT THE SEAMS

(The crowd, including Campbell students, goes crazy. The teacher, who is moved by the

*performance, gives the trophy to Oakley. Campbell enters stage and joins their competitors
and they ALL sing)*

BURSTING AT THE SEAMS

HERE WE ARE AT THE ENDING

AND MAGIC FILLS THE AIR

NOW, LOOK OUT 'CAUSE WE'RE THERE.

FOLKS ARE HERE AROUND US,

OLD AND BRAND NEW FRIENDS.

HOLDING HANDS IS A SYMBOL,

FEEL THE MESSAGE THAT IT SENDS.

HOLDING HANDS, FEELING TRUST.

LOCKING EYES, MAKING DREAMS.

CLIMBING HIGH, SEEING JOY

BURSTING AT THE SEAMS.

THE END

ACT SIX: THE SCORE

With John Forster's model of *How to Eat Like a Child*, and with the help of a friend who frequently writes music, I was able to create a musical score that will be easily accessible for young performers. Because of my novice composition skills, I found myself wanting to put every song in the key of C. While C Major is the easiest key for me to play, it may not be the easiest key to sing. I was taught in my undergraduate training that the key of C is hard for choirs to sing in tune, and by the nature of the overtone series, may present intonation challenges for singers. While that probably will not be a major concern for elementary voices, the key of C offers other more pressing issues. If I wanted to use the lower dominant (G) of the key of C as a pick up, it would be out of the majority of the students' ranges. Because of this reason, and to make it a convenient key in which I can play and write, I decided to keep most of the songs in the key of D. While it includes two sharps, the key is still easy to play, which, in turn, makes it an easier key in which to compose. More importantly, it keeps the octave span in the singers' range, while giving me the freedom to use their lower register, which is perfect for speak-singing. It was important to make the chants in this speech register, as I will probably be working with many students who are not trained aurally to match pitch. This gives every student the opportunity to participate in a song, whether or not they have the vocal abilities. In addition to writing in the lower register of their voices, the songs that include a melody line remain very simple. For example, in the first song, "Uphill," the opening line "first day gotta rehearse, gotta be good, gotta be great" moves by step on a

five-note ascending scale to the dominant note of the key. Keeping it in a five-note range creates an easy melody for the students to memorize.

After writing this first song, I continued in this way for the others, maintaining the key and low sing/speech registers for the vocal line. The only change in key is for the “Campbell Chant.” It is written in the key of A minor, which is the relative minor key of C, and while it is easy to play because it contains no sharps or flats, it does not create the problems of its relative major key of C. I decided to put the Campbell Chant in a minor key to create a feeling of foreboding. Before the audience even knows they are Oakley’s nemesis, the song offers an unsettling response to Campbell.

In addition to keeping the melodies easy for the singers, I kept the accompaniment very simple. Using the idea of following the melody line in the right hand of the accompaniment while keeping a solid tonal support with major chords below, I was able to write songs that support the storyline, yet remain simple for the most novice performer. Kid 10’s solo, “A List That Will Never End,” is the only song that does not include the melody line in the accompaniment. Since it is to be performed *colla voce*, the accompaniment follows the singer’s rhythm by supporting him or her with simple block chords. As this is the only full solo piece in the show, I figured the role would be given to one of the strongest singers who could handle the song. If the student is for some reason unable to learn the melody and perform it without the help of the accompanist, the pianist can double the melodic line.

ACT SEVEN: THE SEQUEL

After previewing a reading of the show, I noted that several changes would enhance the overall presentation. Most importantly, the emotional impact of the show needs to be intensified. While writing the script, I hoped the audience would connect with the character of Kid 10 merely through sympathy; they would see he was shy and ostracized by his peers and immediately pity him. Upon hearing the script, however, it is clear the audience needs to empathize with the character in order to be emotionally affected by the show. Apparently, the emotional disconnect stems from the lack of character development early in the show. The audience members are unaware of the cause of Kid 10's silence and do not have a concrete reason to pity him except for his inability to vocalize and thereby gain acceptance from his peers. To engage the audience in Kid 10's internal struggle, I will create a song that will be performed in the beginning of the show. The song will showcase Kid 10 and two other characters and will be comprised of three solos that explore a secret each character is hiding. The first solo will focus on a student who bullies his peers because he feels powerless at home. The second solo will focus on a student who is perceived as the smartest kid in class. However, she cheats in order to maintain her status. The third solo will reveal that Kid 10 stopped communicating verbally after his mother died the previous year. During this scene, the stage lights will dim and each soloist will have a spotlight. The spotlight will identify the soloists from the other actors and will emphasize the character's isolation as they reveal their secret to the audience. The song also will highlight the theme that people should not judge each other based on superficial reasons. The inclusion of the song should provide the connection the audience needs for Kid 10 later in the play when he is

mocked by peers who are unaware of the tragic reason for his actions. It will also provide more empathy from the other students, as I feel where the play currently stands, all the students are very abrasive and negative towards student 10. The addition of this scene will show a more human and caring side of the students. As for the bullies, inserting several insults that directly reference Kid 10's mother would also heighten the audience's indignation over their treatment of Kid 10, furthering the audience's sympathy for the child.

Another way to improve the show is to explore other forms of nonverbal communication for Kid 10 and the other characters. Some actors may not be equipped to tap their lines in an effective manner, but each new cast will have members with special talents, which should be utilized to make the show as powerful and entertaining as possible. Consequently, Kid 10's role could be modified by having the actor whistle, snap, hum, beat box or dance his words, according to whatever fits the actor's capabilities. In addition, to underscore the hypocritical nature of the bullies who make fun of Kid 10's nonverbal communication, each of those characters could be endowed with some form of nonverbal communication they do unconsciously, such as scratching their heads when they are confused or slapping their legs when they are angry. By mimicking the very behavior they criticize, it will reveal that all the cast members have something in common, even if they do not realize it immediately.

Furthermore, I would like to make the show more accessible to different schools by developing the complexity of the show for older casts. The script's simplicity, while appropriate for elementary schools, will not challenge middle and high school students. In order to engage more sophisticated casts and audiences, I will further develop each of the characters' dialogue and background. For example, I might add some flashbacks of Kid 10

and his mother and the other students with solos in “Song Name.” They would depict scenes that would be too emotionally intense for young children, but that would pique the interest of adolescents. While simply mentioning that Kid 10’s mother died is enough to gain the sympathy of an elementary school audience, a high school production could incorporate a flashback that depicts Kid 10 witnessing his mother dying of cancer or from a gunshot. Similarly, the smart student could flashback to a scene where she is cheating on her SATs. Also, I would adapt the dialogue to older casts by elevating the diction to more realistically portray the speech patterns of teenage actors and increasing the amount of dialogue to reflect their greater capabilities. It would obviously sound ridiculous for a 16-year old young man to say, “Miss Teacher, Miss Teacher, did you hear that?” I do not want the show to demean either the cast or the audience, so I will change the language to avoid that situation.

In a similar manner, the show was created for the purpose of teaching inclusion; hence, I want to modify the script so it is accessible to larger groups. This can be accomplished by adding additional roles and group numbers to accommodate larger groups. For instance, I could include new roles that would be written into the various flashback scenes, such as Kid 10’s mother and the bully’s abusive family, and if necessary, more rival schools could be added to provide roles for a greater number of students. If several rival schools were added, then the choirs from each of those schools could personify different types of bullies. One school could portray the snobs who think they are better than everyone, one school could portray the thugs who have violent tendencies and aggressive language, and one school could portray copycats who all look and act the same

and who despise anyone who is different from them. Each of the schools would function to emphasize the negative nature of each of these qualities, making audience members want to disassociate themselves from these characters and the qualities they embody. More group numbers also could be developed to accommodate for larger casts. Another, even grander, group number can be added as the finale of the show to incorporate the entire cast, perhaps in a reprise of Oakley's final song. If a significant number of cast members are added, however, it may be prudent to develop roles for more adults. Roles could be developed for a teacher of the rival school or for one of the judges. The adult actors act as anchors in the play, grounding the students by pacing the show, helping them with forgotten lines, and helping them with staging. Incorporating a role for another adult in the play will help to prevent the behavioral problems that could come with a larger cast, and it could help avoid any confusion that could stem from lack of communication. In addition, it also would be good for the students to witness as many adults as possible having positive theatrical experiences and modeling the appropriate behaviors of an actor. It will be educational for the students to see two adults who have their lines, cues, and staging memorized and who act and interact in a positive and respectful manner with each other, their fellow cast members, and the audience.

ACT EIGHT: THE FINALE

This thesis, while ever evolving, was intended to offer a solution to the Orange County Public School System and its surrounding counties addressing the lack of resources devoted to engaging underprivileged students in artistic pursuits. Mindful of that purpose, this paper chronicles the development of a script suitable for production in Title I elementary schools located in lower socio-economic areas of Orlando, Florida. Though this project is still developing, substantial progress has been made towards that goal by involving school leaders in Orange, Lake, and Seminole counties who enthusiastically support the idea of integrating arts into their after-school programming. Currently, we are pursuing grant money to fund the development of the program and the show .

As budget cuts erase any semblance of arts education programs in schools, members of the community have two options. Individuals can either bemoan the ineptitude and shortsightedness of government officials, or they can acknowledge that the responsibility of educating our children rests on the shoulders of every member of the community. Artists, in partnership with community arts organizations and corporations that value the arts, can use budget shortfalls as opportunities to become personally involved in developing an appreciation for live theater in a population that has been robbed of such experiences. Built upon the foundation of a simple show, a solid working structure, and minimal funding, the resulting program has the potential to transform students' lives. As artists, and more importantly, as humans, we must not hoard art for those privileged enough to afford it; as responsible beings, we must accept our collective duty to thoroughly

educate and enrich all of our youth, regardless of their financial status. To fulfill this duty, we must provide children a comprehensive arts education, because just as knowledge sustains the mind, art sustains the soul.

APPENDIX: TITLE I SCHOOLS

School	Enrollment	Free/Reduced Lunch %	Poverty %	Grades '09	Grades '08	Grades '07	Grades '06	Grades '05	Grades '04	Minority Rate	White	Black	Native	Asian	Pacific	Multi	% non - hisp	% hisp
Azalea Park	921	82	83%	A	B	B	A	A	A	83	82	8	1	5	0	3	31	69
Catalina	588	89	92	D	C	C	B	D	D	97	9	86	1	0	1	3	90	10
Cheney	518	82	82	B	B	B	A	A	B	75	82	10	0	2	0	5	43	57
Cherokee			96															
Chickasaw	763	82	82	A	A	A	A	B	A	84	85	7	0	2	0	7	30	70
Cypress Park	381	77	77	B	D	C	B	A	B	64	72	14	2	9	0	3	61	39
Eagle's Nest	646	87	88	C	A	B	B	C		93	15	80	0	1	0	3	85	15
Eccleston	485	92	94	A	C	A	C	C	A	100	3	96	0	0	0	1	97	3
Englewood	582	89	91	C	D	C	C	B	C	91	86	10	1	1	0	2	20	80
Fern Creek	325	82	84	A	B	A	A	A	C	75	42	45	1	3	0	10	80	20
Gateway			86															
Grand Avenue	222		98								15	80	0	1	0	4	88	12
Hiawassee	726	87	89	B	D	C	C	D	C	97	8	86	1	1	0	3	93	7
Hungerford	248	96	96	A	C	C	F	D	C	97	12	85	0	0	0	3	91	9
Ivey Lane	342	99	99	D	C	B	C	F	D	99	8	92	0	0	0	1	95	5
Killarney	437	80	80	A	A	A	C	A	B	68	49	38	0	6	0	7	81	19
Lake Gem	866	82	83	A	A	A	A	A	C	91	20	73	1	2	0	4	90	10
Lake Weston	532	96	97	B	C	D	B	C	C	91	42	55	0	1	0	3	67	33
Lancaster	767	86	87	A	C	A	A	B	A	90	75	20	0	3	0	2	32	68
Lawton Chiles	719	74	75	A	A	A	B	A	A	73	79	14	0	3	0	5	46	54
Little River	842	81	81	C	B	B	C	B	B	84	84	11	0	1	0	1	32	68
Lovell	729	89	88	B	B	A	C	C	C	83	73	23	0	0	0	4	44	56
Maxey (William	303	80	82	A	C	C	A	B	A	83	47	46	1	4	0	2	71	29
McCoy	686	89	90	A	C	C	B	A	C	89	87	11	0	1	0	1	23	77
Meadow Woods	834	81	81	A	B	A	C	A	B	89	75	17	1	3	0	3	35	65
Millennia	762	81	82	A	B					86	53	40	1	4	0	3	59	41
Mollie Ray	542	95	96	A	F	D	B	A	B	99	7	91	1	0	0	0	94	6
Oak Hill	492	77	78	B	B	B	B	C	A	83	38	49	2	7	1	3	82	18
Oakshire	760	78	78	A	A	A	B	A	A	92	78	8	7	4	1	3	21	79
Rock Lake	280	96	96	A	A	A	C	A	C	95	10	87	0	1	0	2	94	6
Rolling Hills	579	90	90	C	C	B	C	C	A	97	12	84	0	1	0	3	91	9
Rosemont	848	88	88	C	C	D	B	B	C	95	12	82	0	2	0	3	92	8
Sadler	737	93	94	A	C	A	A	C	D	95	68	28	0	2	0	1	36	64
Shingle Creek	1045	91	91	A	B	B	C	C	C	96	49	46	0	2	0	3	55	45
Spring Lake	567	81	81	A	B	A	B	B	B	50	95	4	0	0	0	1	57	43
Tangelo Park	393	86	86	A	A	B	A	C	A	93	20	77	1	1	0	1	88	12
Three Points	670	86	86	A	C	A	B	A	C	82	89	6	0	2	0	3	30	70
Tildenville	534	84	84	A	A	B	A	C	B	81	82	13	0	2	0	2	35	65
Union Park	644	76	78	A	A	A	B	A	A	81	80	13	0	3	0	4	37	63
Ventura	683	85	87	A	C	A	B	A	A	85	87	11	0	1	0	2	28	72
Washington Sho	529	95	96	A	C	C	C	D	D	99	3	96	0	0	0	1	97	3
West Oaks	590	90	91	B	C	C	C	D		97	16	77	1	2	0	3	86	14
Wheatley	403	96	95	D	D	D	C	C	C	94	34	64	0	0	0	2	73	27
Winegard	687	87	88	A	A	A	A	A	A	89	66	24	3	3	1	3	40	60
Wyndham Lakes	1032	77	77	A	C	C				91	79	12	2	4	0	3	29	71
Zellwood	554	86	87	B	C	B	C	B	A	67	77	19	0	1	0	3	54	46

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